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THE
Country Clergyman's
SHROVETIDE GIFT
TO HIS
PARISHIONERS.

H
TAKEN CHIEFLY FROM
Dr. PRIMATT'S DISSERTATION
K
ON THE
DUTY OF MERCY,
AND
SIN OF CRUELTY TO BRUTES.

THE THIRD EDITION.

Open thy Mouth for the Dumb.

LEMUEL.

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T H E
COUNTRY CLERGYMAN'S
SHROVETIDE GIFT.

EVERY man, who has any proper notions of justice, must acknowledge, that, if he were put to unnecessary and undeserved pain by another man, his tormentor would do him an act of injustice: he must also acknowledge, that, if he were to put another man to unnecessary or undeserved pain, or to take advantage of his own greater strength, or fortune, to oppress an inferior, the injustice would be the same in him; because it would be doing that to another which he is not willing should be done to himself. And, for the same reason, he will not torment or abuse a Brute*; but will consider that the meanest creature upon earth, if it be in no respect hurtful to him, has an equal right with himself to enjoy the blessings of life: and that wantonly to punish, or put to torture, any animal, is to

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* I use the word BRUTE as a general term for every creature INFERIOR to man, whether beast, bird, fish, fly, or worm,

sin against the great law of humanity; which extends to every creature that hath the same sense of pain which he has. And yet the many horrid instances of cruelty practised by men, in almost all ranks of life, on the unhappy Brutes, without punishment by the law; without much notice or reproof from the pulpit, would almost tempt one to think that a great part of mankind believed that cruelty to Brutes is not an act of injustice. It is certain, however, that the cruelty of men to Brutes is a greater act of injustice than the cruelty of men to men.

If one man be cruel to another, he that is oppressed has a tongue to plead his cause, and a finger to point out the oppressor; but the suffering Brute can neither utter his complaints, nor describe the author of his wrongs.—There are also courts of justice to which the injured Man may appeal, and where punishment will be inflicted on the offender; but, with shame to man, and sorrow for the brute, I ask, what laws are there now in force to rescue the wretched Animal from moaning in unregarded sorrow, and sinking beneath the wanton cruelty of his torturers? A man may, in various ways, be made amends for the injuries you have done him: you know his wants, and may relieve him; you may give him clothes, or food, or money, and thus make him some atonement; but if through passion, or malice, or sportive cruelty, you have broken the limbs of

† The great frequency of these acts of cruelty amongst us is, probably, owing to an opinion that they are not criminal; and this opinion seems to proceed from a neglect of the clergy in representing them as such.—SERMON ON CLEMENCY TO BRUTES.

§ What exquisite tortures does that most serviceable animal, the horse, often endure! How frequently, to the pangs of hunger and a distempered body, are added the most cutting stripes and scourges, often wantonly dealt out by some merciless monster of a master, only, perhaps, for not performing impossibilities!

of a brute, or deprived him of his eye sight, how can you make him amends? You have lessened his means of getting subsistence, and will scarcely take the trouble of providing it for him, which yet, by the law of justice, you are obliged to do; you have destroyed his earthly happiness, *which was his ALL*; have maimed, or blinded him for ever, and done him an injury which cannot be repaired.

The lot of the suffering Brute therefore is truly pitiable; and the more pitiable his lot, the more base, barbarous, and *unjust*, must every instance of cruelty to him be. But it becomes *Christians* further to consider whether Mercy to Brutes be not a *duty commanded*, and Cruelty to them a *sin forbidden* in the Holy Scriptures; the Word of God, the common Father of the whole Creation, "whose mercy is over all his works."

The wise and good Law-giver of the World, the Lord of every Creature, has been pleased to create Animals of various kinds to assist our weaknesses, and to supply our wants; and, in order to keep them in due subjection to us, he has thought it good to deny to these animals the powers of reason and speech, with which he has been pleased to bless and distinguish mankind. For our service God has been pleased to create these useful animals *large and strong, tame and tractable*; they are much in our power, and committed by the *Father of every living Creature* to our care. But the power granted to men over Brutes cannot be a power to abuse or oppress them. If we are permitted to kill the body for our sustenance, to destroy the life when injurious, or employ it in our service; yet have we no right to put these creatures to unnecessary labour, to load them with immoderate burthens, or aggravate their sufferings by severities, but are bound, by the laws of
humanity

humanity and justice, to use their services so as to allow them all the enjoyment of life that their situation will admit. Yet man, ungrateful man! deaf to the voice of justice, and hardened against the feelings of compassion, abuses his power over these poor creatures, because, for his sake, they are defenceless and dumb, and have neither reason to convince him of his injustice, or speech to utter their complaints.

But though Man be cruel, God is righteous and merciful. To check our pride, to prevent the abuse of our power, and to curb our passions, he graciously condescends to reason and speak for those who cannot reason and speak for themselves; and he has given particular laws for the direction of our conduct towards those Brutes which are more immediately within our power, and therefore most liable to suffer by the abuse of it.

There are *three* instances of regard which the creatures intrusted to our care have, in consideration of their services and dependence upon us, an undoubted right to; and these are *food, rest, and tender usage*. These three things the goodness of their Creator has been pleased to covenant for on their behalf, and to enjoin by his written law.

As to the duty of giving them food in due season, it is thus commanded in the Book of Deuteronomy; "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn." This is a precept of justice and mercy. Labouring brutes are the cheapest servants we keep; food is the only wages which they expect for all their toil and drudgery in the service of man, and to deny them a sufficiency of food is not only imprudent in the master, but it is barbarous, unjust, and wicked. This, however,

however, is not all that is required by the divine precept; "not to muzzle the ox" means something more than not to starve him. To starve him to death is such a mixture of cruelty and folly as no one in his senses can be supposed to be guilty of: The precept therefore enjoins the care and attention of the master to the ease and happiness of his beast, so that no pretence of trouble, or inconvenience, of business, hurry, or forgetfulness, can excuse the master from his *duty* of giving food to his hungry, or drink to his thirsty cattle. Suffer not then the beast that has carried you, or ploughed for you, to wait *long* for his necessary refreshment; for his daily labour give him his daily wages, and refresh him as *often* and as *soon* as he is weary.

To give cattle food in due season is, however, but part of our duty to them. A man may feed his beast to fatness, and yet be cruel to him if he works him beyond his strength, or gives him not *sufficient rest*. And here also the goodness of their Creator condescends to interpose in their behalf; for "God spake and said, "Remember the Sabbath-Day to keep it holy; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy servant, nor thy *cattle*."

"Remember the Sabbath-Day," is but another expression for "Remember mercy," or, "Remember that the Sabbath is ordained for the rest and refreshment of all who are mentioned in the Commandment," in the conclusion of which it is said, "The Lord blessed the Sabbath-Day, and hallowed it." God first gave a blessing to the labouring man and beast, by appointing a Sabbath, or day of rest (for that is the meaning of the word *Sabbath*), and then he hallowed or sanctified it to holy duties. As the rest of the seventh day affords leisure for spiritual duties, God hath

hath enjoined sanctification as well as rest on that day. But the first motive of the appointment of the Sabbath was mercy to man and beast; therefore if you work on the Sabbath-Day, you sin, because you do not *sanctify* it according to the Commandment; and if you do no work yourselves, but set your servants and your cattle to work on that day, you sin also, because you do not *blefs* it according to the design of it†: for as the Sabbath was ordained for beast as well as man, though the beast is not capable of keeping it as a day of *sanctification*, he hath, *by the command of God*, a right to a Sabbath, as a day of *rest and blessing*.

And as the Almighty hath graciously appointed a day of rest for cattle, and thereby instructed us in the duty of mercy to them, it follows that we ought not, at any time, to overwork them, or lay too heavy burthens upon them; for, as “the end of the commandment is charity,” founded upon mercy, every instance of unmercifulness is a transgression of the spirit and intention of this Commandment; therefore, if a man observes the Sabbath ever so scrupulously, and yet, on the other days of the week, puts his servants or cattle to work beyond their strength, or keeps them too long at work, without allowing them sufficient rest, he is a transgressor of that general law of mercy which the Sabbath was appointed to promote; and as man and beast are both included in the same Commandment, it follows, that Mercy to Brutes is no less a *duty* than Mercy to Men.

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† There may be cases of necessity which require the labour of cattle on the Sabbath-Day, and, in such cases, it is no sin to use them. Our Saviour tells us that “the son of man is lord of the Sabbath;” for (says he) the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; that is, man was not created for the sake of keeping a sabbath, but the sabbath is to be observed as the duties, situations, and circumstances of men will admit.

But to allow the creatures that serve us *food* and *rest*, is by no means all our duty towards them; they have a farther claim upon us, that is; *tendernefs in our ufage of them.*

“ A righteous man,” faith Solomon; “ regardeth
“ the life,” (that is, the happinefs,) “ of his beaft;”
he attends to all his wants and infirmities, and confiders
well his age, and his ftrength: If young, he oppreffeth
him not with a load to which his ftrength is unequal;
if aged, he addeth not one weight more to the weight
of his years; but, from a fenfe of gratitude, rewardeth
his paff services with increafing forbearance and indul-
gence. Whether young or old, ftiong or weak, found
or maimed, a righteous man proportions his work to
the ability of his brute; and, to guard us againft
greater instances of injuftice, we find this precept in
the law of Mofes, “ Thou fhalt not plough with an
“ ox and an afs together;” which implies that (as the
ftrength of an afs is not equal to the ftrength of an ox)
we fhould not fet a weak beaft to keep pace with, or
do the work of a ftiong one, nor to any work which
he is not capable of performing. Such ufage is unjuft
and cruel; and let it be remembered, *every act of
cruelty is wickednefs.*

Hitherto we have only confidered our duty towards
our own cattle; but it muft not be fupposed that our
mercy and regard to Brutes is to ftop there: Any beaft
in diftrefs has a claim upon us for affiftance. “ Thou
“ fhalt not,” fay the Scriptures, “ fee thy brother’s
“ ox, or his fheep *going aftray* and hide thyfelf from
“ them, thou fhalt in any cafe, bring them again unto
“ thy brother; and if thy brother be not nigh thee,
“ thou fhalt bring it to thine own houfe, and it fhall
“ be with thee, until thy brother feek after it, and
B “ thou

“ thou shalt restore it to him again*.” This precept is not founded merely in the law of justice, but in merey and compassion to the beast; otherwise it might have been sufficient to drive the beast to some place of security†, or tie it to a gate ’till the owner should find it: But the law saith, “ Thou shalt bring it unto thine house, and “ it shall be with thee;” as the finder, thou art possessor of it in trust for the owner, and shalt take as much care of it as if it were thy own, ’till he recovers it.

And as the Holy Scriptures have thus provided for the beast that is *going astray*, so are they no less indulgent to the beast that has met with an accident. “ Thou shalt not see thy brother’s ox or his ass fall “ down, and hide thyself from him, thou shalt surely “ help to lift him up again.” And this “ labour of “ love” must not be neglected though the beast belong to an enemy, to a man who hateth us, who would rejoice at our adversity, and, was he to see our beast fallen down, would keep him down rather than help him up. In this case, every man should ask himself, did the distressed Beast ever do me an injury? If not, what

* The owner paying the charges of keeping it, from the time it was brought to the house ’till its being restored.—PATRICK.

† There is scarcely any spectacle more affecting than the sight of those poor creatures which we see starving in those places of confinement, called POUNDS. It is no uncommon thing to see a blind horse, worn out with labour, locked up for forty-eight hours, without either food or water, in a dirty place, where he cannot conveniently lie down. The absurdity of this punishment is as great as its cruelty; for, if any offence be committed, surely the owner, not the horse, should be punished. It is to be wished that such places of confinement were so contrived as to afford conveniencies for the proper accommodation of cattle; and that such cattle as are impounded should be fed at some EXTRAORDINARY expence to the owners. This would either prevent trespasses, or properly and justly punish the negligence which occasions them; and, at the same time, would relieve our most useful and chearful servants from a state of suffering and misery which brings no advantage to any one.

what is it to me, with respect to the beast, that his master is my enemy? The beast is innocent, though the master is guilty; and to refuse assistance to the wretched brute, because his master is my enemy, is a weak, a cruel, and a misplaced revenge.

In short, if any Brute be in distress, and we know it, and are able to relieve him, it is our *duty*, and we are commanded to do it, whether the owner be our friend or foe. The precept of our blessed Saviour is no less extensive than compassionate; "Be ye merciful, as your heavenly father is merciful." This divine pattern and precept of mercy is also strengthened and secured by the blessing and promise of mercy; "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." And similar to this is the advice of the son of Sirach, "Make way for every work of mercy, for every man shall find according to his works." The meaning of these sentences is, *Be thou merciful, and God will be merciful to thee: Be thou cruel, and God will requite thy cruelty.*

It is greatly to be lamented that there should be so much occasion to condemn the behaviour of many parents who neglect to instruct their children in the *duty* of Mercy to Brutes†; and there is reason to be-

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† Cruelty to any thing that God has endued with feeling is the worst depravity of human nature; and it is always with inexpressible concern that we see the seeds of this vice thoughtlessly sown by unfeeling parents, nurses, &c. and habits of barbarity rooted in the tempers of infants, by giving them little animals, birds, and insects, to play with and torment, by way of amusement. Thus they are early taught to make slight account of the lives or painful sensations of such poor dumb sufferers as have the misfortune to fall into their hands; and hence we are not to wonder at the unconcern with which, when grown up, they rob the innocent feathered tribe of their callow progeny, or basely tie the spirited cock, and which is still more savage, even the meek-eyed pullet, and the tender dove, to the stake, to be pelted piecemeal to death.—MONTHLY REVIEW.

lieve that in many cases where the peace of families has been disturbed by the undutifulness and obstinacy of children, the parents have contributed greatly to it, by not restraining their children, in time, from acts of wanton cruelty to birds and insects. Such indulgence roots out from their once tender hearts every feeling of pity and compassion, and by shutting their ears and hardening their hearts, against the cries of suffering animals, renders them also deaf to the voice of nature; 'till at last the unhappy parents find that their foolish indulgence has taught their wretched children to be as insensible to a parent's pains and tears, as to the pain and misery of tormented brutes. So true it is that our treatment of beasts has an influence on our moral character, and the gentleness of our manners.

Cruelty is the *first* sin we read of in Scripture after the fall of Adam; and, whilst it lurks in the heart, it lays a broad and deep foundation for every act of mischief and injustice. He who violates nature by any act of wanton cruelty, how trifling soever the object, can have no fear of God, no principle of justice or honour, much less any sense of Christianity; and if there be any
barbarous

§ Hard-heartedness is always encouraged, IF NOT PLANTED, in the hearts of children, by suffering them to exercise the most unprovoked and wanton acts of cruelty on the innocent brute creation. The child begins these acts of cruelty without any consciousness of giving pain; he delights only in the novelty of the contortions and cries of the suffering creatures, and proceeds, in this unmeaning folly, without rebuke, 'till, at length, the practice of wantonly tormenting becomes a strong and confirmed habit of amusement; and it is then too late to convince him of his error, by telling him that the creature suffers pain; for his habit is then become a passion, which will probably be too strong for his pity. Early therefore should a child be made sensible of the miseries of every creature that hath life, by teaching him the connection between the outward marks and inward feelings of distress; for this alone will effectually cause him to sympathize with the afflictions of his fellow creatures; and this sympathy, if properly cherished, will produce a benevolent disposition in every instance where the exertion of benevolence is necessary.—DR. BROWN.

barbarous sport that is particularly disgraceful to Christianity, it is THROWING at COCKS.

Of all the various kinds of barbarity in which the wantonness of cruelty can be exercised, none is more scandalous, mean, and detestable than this. No other nation under Heaven practises it but our own; and whence it took its rise I never could learn to my satisfaction: But the common account is, that the crowing of a cock prevented some of our forefathers, the Saxons, from massacring, another part of our forefathers, the Danes, their conquerors, on the morning of a Shrove-Tuesday, whilst asleep in their beds. Now, if this account be true, we have very little reason to continue the custom, for many of us, in all probability, owe our being to the prevention of that massacre; and as for others, it can only serve to shew that they are the cruel and cowardly offspring of cruel and cowardly forefathers. I say cowardly, for cruelty is a sure mark of cowardice; and how very great the cruelty I am speaking of is, you who have seen the heavy blows given to one of these poor animals, at the stake of torture, and heard his piercing screams; who have seen his wings broken, his beak dropping blood, and his body sinking, by slow degrees, in bitter anguish to the ground, need not be told. Surely treatment like this, of a weak, defenceless animal, an animal brave by nature, and courageous even to death against his equal, greatly resembles that cowardly baseness which tempted our Saxon forefathers to steal silently to the chambers of their victorious enemies, and murder them sleeping in their beds.

Nor is cowardice the only base quality with which we are chargeable for our national abuse of this creature. Was it a bird of rapine, had we been hurt, or feared

feared being hurt by it, even then *cruelty* would be unjustifiable. But to exercise cruelty on a creature that flies from the violence of others for protection to our roofs, a creature which is more universally useful to man than any of the feathered race, is abominably ungrateful, and, if not stupidly inconsiderate, audaciously wicked.

Be, therefore, ye who are Parents and Masters of Families, particularly careful to put an end to this most barbarous diversion; neither practise it yourselves, nor permit any under your influence to do it. Consider that this bloody custom is detested and abhorred by the better sort of your countrymen; consider the shocking abuse of time in such employments; an abuse, so much the more shocking, as it is shewn in tormenting that very creature which seems intended for our remembrancer to improve it; the creature whose voice, like a trumpet, summoneth man forth to his labour in the morning, and admonisheth him of the flight of his precious hours throughout the day.

Consider the mischiefs which often happen to the spectators of this tumultuous barbarity, and which the world, and the sufferers' own consciences are apt to upbraid them with, as so many just judgments of Providence. Particularly, let those parents, who are at an expence to enable their children to act as principals on these occasions, reflect on the bitter anguish they must feel should a child lose an eye or a limb by their criminal indulgence. Let them also consider that they encourage in their children a habit of gaming which may end in poverty, and a habit of cruelty which may end in murder; that oaths, curses, and blasphemies, make a great part of the language in such scenes of cruelty; and, that by suffering their children to mix in them, they make a dangerous advance towards hardening them in wickedness.

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By way of conclusion, I would observe, that it seems impossible for any man, who acknowledges the authority of the Holy Scriptures, and considers the merciful intention of them, to doubt either of the goodness of God, or of the *duty of mercy*, or the *sin of cruelty*, towards the brute creation. The religion of JESUS CHRIST arose from the mercy of God, and the gracious design of it was to promote peace to every living creature, and a spirit of good will in men: And, as it hath pleased God to display in the Gospel the riches of his goodness and mercy towards us, and the revealer of his blessed will, the Author and Finisher of our faith hath commanded us “ to be merciful as our “ heavenly father is merciful,” it is the duty of Christians, above all people, to extend the precept of mercy to every object of mercy. A cruel Christian is a monster of ingratitude, a scandal to his profession; he beareth the name of CHRIST in vain, and in vain will he plead the mercies of GOD in JESUS, when he is summoned unto judgment. Cruelty will prevent mercy even in the Father of Mercies, and cut off all hope even in the God of Comfort. “ He who hath shewed no “ mercy, shall have judgment without mercy;” and, in the righteous sentence of God, be forced to confess, “ As I have done, so God hath requited me.”—“ Put “ on, therefore,” as the apostle directs, “ bowels of “ mercy and kindness,” and be careful that no Brute of any kind, whether intrusted to your care, or coming in your way, suffer through your neglect or abuse. Let no views of profit, no compliance with custom, no fear of being laughed at, ever tempt you to the least act of injustice or cruelty to any creature whatever; but let this be your rule through life, every where, and at all times, to *do to others as, in their situation, you would be done unto.*

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